CHAPTER

TWO

THE CITY AT THE CUSP OF A NEW CENTURY

vision 2001 2020

2.1 THE PAST AS PROLOGUE: ROANOKE'S HISTORY

Roanoke's history as a crossroads for commerce began in the 1740s. Mark Evans and Tasker Tosh came from Pennsylvania and took up land near the salt licks where Indian and animal trails crossed in the center of the valley. For generations, those salt marshes, or licks as they were called, had been a gathering place for buffalo, elk and deer, and the Native Americans who hunted them. By 1798, the thriving community was known as Big Lick and had a federally-established post office. In 1834, the Town of Gainesborough was chartered adjacent to the village of Big Lick. The Virginia and Tennessee railroad came to the valley in 1852 and established its route just south of the community. With the coming of the railroad, the settlement patterns of Big Lick shifted further south and west to the area now in the vicinity of Second Street, S.W. and the railroad tracks. The older settlement, including Gainesborough, became known as Old Lick. In 1874, the new village was chartered as the Town of Big Lick.

Seven years later, with the coming of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, Big Lick was renamed Roanoke for the river and the county. Roanoke was derived from the Indian word "Rawrenock," a name for the shell beads worn by the Indians and used for trade.

The arrival of the railroad marked the beginning of the building boom. The legacy of development patterns begun in these early boom years is still evident. The location of the Norfolk and Western headquarters in Roanoke sparked a building boom between 1874 and 1889.

Roanoke was chartered as a city in 1882. Industrial development grew along the rail lines and the Roanoke River. Speculative land companies built housing to meet the needs of the railway workers. By the early 1900s, Roanoke had established itself as a growing industrial city, and the desire for homeownership spurred more substantial residential development.

In 1907, Roanoke's first comprehensive plan, entitled *Remodeling Roanoke*, was commissioned by a group of citizens called the Women's Civic Betterment Club. This plan, written by John Nolen, was one of the first such efforts in the nation. It established the foundation for the City by coordinating the location of the downtown buildings along Jefferson Street and at the site of the City Market, establishing an orderly street system, and proposing a network of parks.

Twenty years later, Roanoke citizens and City government recognized the need to update the plan. Key results of the 1928 plan can be seen throughout Roanoke today. The road and park systems were developed and school locations were identified. The sites for Victory Stadium, the City's first airport, and the present municipal buildings were chosen. The plan included the City's first zoning ordinance, which controlled how land in the City could be used.

By 1964, the City had grown to include 26 square miles with a population of 97,110. When the City developed a new plan in 1964, the prevailing wisdom was that the greater metropolitan area, which included the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, Salem City, and Vinton, would continue to grow rapidly. Residential and retail development would follow the national trend of moving to outlying suburban areas. While business would continue to locate in the central downtown area, the surrounding City, with its easy access to rail sidings and major thoroughfares, would continue to be an attractive and cost-effective location for large industry.

The plan responded to this projection by recommending reuse of old neighborhood areas as centers for business, industry, offices, and institutions. In 1966, the City's zoning code was changed to reflect this plan. While the plan reflected the accepted development theory, little protection was built into the zoning or planning to protect the residential and other low-density areas during the projected transition phase to higher density and more intense business and industrial uses.

From the 1980s to the present, as described in the introduction, Roanoke turned to structured citizen input to help guide its planning and decision making. Not coincidentally, the City began to rediscover the value of its older neighborhoods. Approaches were developed to retain the City's residential and business character. Revised zoning reflected preservation values and mitigation of conflict from new development. New action plans and strategies for downtown, neighborhoods, parks, and economic development were created. Roanoke continued to evolve from a manufacturing to a service economy while maintaining its stability as a mature city, the vibrant center of a vital region.

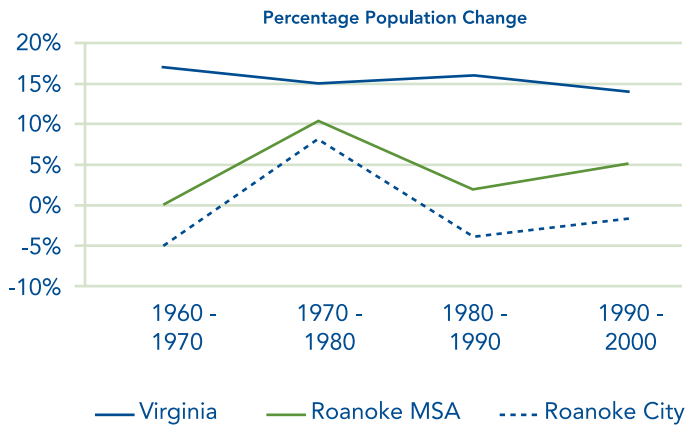
2.2 ROANOKE TODAY

Who We Are: Demographics and Institutions

Demographic Base

Roanoke has a relatively stable population representing approximately 40% of the metropolitan area. No large population gains or losses have occurred in the past 20 years. The City has experienced a slight but steady population decrease from the 1980 Census of 100,200 and the 1990 Census of 96,397 to the 2000 Census of 94,911. Between 1990 and 2000, the metropolitan area population increased by five percent to 235,932. Roanoke's successful efforts to diversify its economy, develop a strong downtown, and strengthen its neighborhoods have been credited for the City's success in retaining a relatively stable population base in the face of the trend for central cities to experience more significant population loss. For purposes of Vision 2001-2020, the City should project the continued trend of a slight but steady population decrease over the next 10 years.

Reporting on population statistics and trends has traditionally relied on information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The population totals and ethnic characteristics from the 2000 Census indicate very slight changes from the projections and trends used by the City's *Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan* (which incorporated data from Claritas, Inc., a national firm specializing in projections and market trends) and the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. For planning purposes, as detailed U.S. Census data is not yet available, the statistics currently available from these latter sources will be used in describing the City's demographics.



Age Structure

There has been very little change in the age structure since 1985, except for the inevitable aging of different generations, moving their relative proportion along the population curve. The largest segment of the population (59.3%) falls into the working age brackets of 20-64. Roanoke's elderly residents, age 65 and over, and youth, age 18 and under, together comprise an estimated 40.7% of the population. These non-working age groups require a variety of health, education, recreation, and other human services.

The over 64 population in Roanoke generally has increased. In 1970 it was 13.5% of the City total; in 1980 it was 15.7%; in 1990 it was 17%; however, in 2000 the percentage of residents 65 and older decreased to 16%.

Trends

The increase in population is occurring in the age groups of 40-54 and ages 85+. These are generally the older families, empty nesters, and retired citizens groups. Senior citizen groups are increasing in part due to longer life expectancies. The age group of 10-14 shows the highest increase among the under 18 age groups.

		AGE 17 & UNDER		AGE 18-44		AGE 45-64		AGE 65-84		AGE 85 & OVER	
Jurisdiction	**Med. Age**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
Botetourt County	36.8	5,806	23.20%	10,281	41.10%	5,858	23.40%	2,836	11.40%	211	0.90%
Roanoke City	35.2	21,174	22.00%	40,890	42.40%	17,887	18.60%	14,459	15.00%	1,987	2.10%
Roanoke County	37.3	17,827	22.50%	32,776	41.30%	18,023	22.70%	9,498	12.00%	1,208	1.50%
Salem City	37.1	4,667	19.60%	9,973	42.00%	5,172	21.80%	3,529	14.90%	415	1.70%
MSA TOTAL	**36.4**	**49,474**	**22.00%**	**93,920**	**41.90%**	**46,940**	**20.90%**	**30,322**	**13.50%**	**3,821**	**1.70%**

Bureau of the Census: 1990

The decreases in population are occurring in the age groups of 18-29 and 60-69 year olds. The younger set is generally the younger adults right out of college or young couples who move due to job and housing opportunities.

Each of these trends is largely due to past population bulges or dips for specific age groups, modified to some degree by in- and out-migration trends. For instance, the dip in the age group of 60-69 year olds mirrors earlier low proportions of 50-59 year olds ten years ago. Consequently, a bulge in the senior population can be expected in twenty years time, as the current bulge in 40-49 year olds makes its way through the system. This projection has policy and economic implications.

Similarly, the current dip in 10-19 year olds can cause concern if it extends into a future decline in younger-age workers and parents. This could be mitigated by additional in-migration, spurred by economic opportunities or other factors.

Population Characteristics
The majority racial population is that of whites at 71.3%. African-Americans are the second largest group, projected to have increased from 24.1% in 1990 to 27.4% in 2000. Hispanic-Americans and Asian-Americans, although smaller groups in terms of absolute numbers, are rapidly expanding in terms of percentage of growth, both projected to have increased from 0.7% in 1990 to 2% by the year 2000.

An analysis of the impediments to fair housing in the Roanoke Metropolitan Area completed in April 2001 reports a high degree of racial isolation in the City and metropolitan area. An estimated 89.7% of the population of the metro area lies in census tracts that are either overwhelmingly white (more than 80%) or overwhelmingly black. Although the number of African-Americans living in Roanoke County, City of Salem, and the Town of Vinton increased, the majority of the area's African-Americans (85.4%) live in the City of Roanoke.

Household Size and Characteristics
Decreasing household size is another national trend shared by Roanoke. In Roanoke, household size has decreased from 2.85 persons per household in 1970 to 2.6 in 1980 and to 2.3 in 1990, and is projected to decrease to 2.22 in 2002. The total number of households is also decreasing.

Institutional Capacity
Roanoke's strong citizen spirit is reflected in its support of a wide range of civic, cultural, environmental, and religious organizations.

Neighborhood Organizations
The Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership, a public/private partnership including neighborhoods, businesses, civic and human service agencies, and the City government, has been actively involved in supporting community activities since 1980. It has grown from the initial four neighborhoods to an active membership of more than 20 neighborhood and business organizations. The Partnership has grown from its initial role of supporting and developing neighborhood organizations to providing technical assistance on a range of projects such as the creation of neighborhood development corporations, grant writing, and self-sufficiency.

Participating neighborhood organizations range from small groups focused on neighborhood clean-up projects and crime prevention programs to larger multi-focused organizations actively involved in development projects and citizen advocacy.

Advocacy and Action Groups
Roanoke and its surrounding region also boast a wide range of advocacy and action groups

ranging from topical groups such as environmental and historic organizations to special focus groups such as the NAACP, Total Action Against Poverty, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other nonprofit organizations.

The National Conference for Community and Justice provides services regarding conflict resolution, advocacy, promoting cultural and religious understanding, and multicultural education.

Civic and Cultural Organizations

In keeping with the City's position as a regional hub, Roanoke's civic and cultural organizations such as the Jaycees, Kiwanis, Arts Council, Square Society, Junior League, and Lions Clubs attract members from the greater Roanoke region. This infusion of energy and support for the community strengthens the City's position as the financial, retail, and cultural center of the Valley.

As the largest city in western Virginia, Roanoke is rich in multi-cultural organizations including museums, theaters, symphony, ballet, opera, and others that provide a wide range of cultural opportunities for City residents and the surrounding region.

Outdoor interests are strongly supported by a range of clubs and organizations that sponsor outdoor activities and champion the importance of maintaining the natural environment.

What We Do: City/Regional Economic Profile

A healthy and vital economy is vital to Roanoke's success. Economic activity is the source of jobs and income for City residents as well as nonresidents. Economic activity provides tax revenues to local governments, and many businesses provide goods and services that enhance the quality of life in City neighborhoods.

The City of Roanoke is not in itself a local economy. Activity within the boundaries of the City is part of the economy of the entire Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). While the City, the Counties of Roanoke and Botetourt, and the City of Salem have separate political identities, in economic terms they function as a single unit with the City as their economic center. The City of Roanoke is home to 53.1% of the companies in the MSA and employs 54.7% of the area's employees.

Research has shown that along with the existing labor force of 129,097, there are over 10,000 total new entrants into the labor force each year alone from college/university and secondary educational institutions located in and around the region. A survey of major local firms indicated a large number of new applicants each month who provide those firms with a more-than-adequate pool from which to fulfill staffing needs.

The pattern of much of Roanoke's economy was established prior to 1920. Roanoke's economic base, however, has been more varied since the economic recession of the late 1950s, at which point the City began its long transition from a manufacturing to a service/information-based economy. Today, Roanoke's economy is well diversified, consisting

of service industries, wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, governmental activity, transportation, and other non-farm activities.

By 1998, the service industry was the largest industry in the City, employing almost 25,000 or 33.1% of the labor base. Health care related activity accounted for one-third of the service industry, due, in part, to Roanoke's service as the regional medical center of southwestern Virginia. Reflecting a nationwide trend toward an increase in service industries, the City has experienced employment gains mainly in business, legal, educational, engineering, and management services.

Trade (retail sales) is the second largest industry, covering a 16-county trade area, which has a combined population in excess of 600,000. This population is located within a one-hour drive of downtown Roanoke and has effective buying income of over $9.4 billion. Roanoke's per capita taxable sales in 1998 were $11,446, the highest in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Roanoke has had the highest per capita taxable sales in the Commonwealth for seven years.

Manufacturing is the third largest industry in the City, employing 9,926 workers or 13.2% of the employment base. A broad range of manufacturing companies is represented, producing buses, textiles and apparel, fiber optics, business forms, and ceramic chip capacitors.

Government is the fourth largest employer in the City with 6,964 employees, of which 59% are local government, 25% are federal, and 16% are state employees.

Transportation is the fifth largest industry in the City, representing over 5,400 jobs, while finance, insurance, and real estate ranks sixth with 4,630 employed. Banking institutions dot the City, constituting some of the area's largest employers. Insurance and real estate firms are well represented.

FACTS ABOUT ROANOKE

- Total employment in the City increased by 7.9% from 119,595 in 1990 to 129,097 in 2000.
- In 1990, the unemployment rate for the City was 3.6%, growing to a high of 5.6% in 1992. It dropped to an historic low of 1.6% in 2000. Along with 2,012 unemployed persons counted in April 2000, it is estimated that over 8,960 persons are employed yet remain below the poverty level, indicating the existence of a potential pool of "underemployed" who would be willing to move to another job to improve their wages.
- The Roanoke MSA dominates the local labor draw area as well, with a net in-commuting total each day of almost 15,000 workers. In 1980, 10,500 people commuted into the City; in 1990, that number had doubled to 20,234.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS:
Second Quarter, 1999 Roanoke Valley Region

Employer	# of Employees
Carilion Health System	6,040
Virginia Veterans Care Center Veterans Affairs Medical Center	3,223
Roanoke County Public Schools	2,808
Norfolk Southern	2,800
First Union	2,610
Roanoke City Public Schools	2,482
City of Roanoke	2,270
United States Postal Service	2,228
Commonwealth of Virginia (State Government)	1,772
Kroger	1,752

Employer	# of Employees
Advance Stores Co Inc	1,608
Allstate	1,416
ITT	1,405
Lewis Gale Hospital	1,369
General Electric	1,335
Manpower	1,256
County of Roanoke	1,190
Wal-Mart Stores	1,126
Yokohama Tire Corp	1,121
City of Salem	1,056

Source: City of Roanoke, Department of Economic Development

How We Live: Land Uses, Districts and Neighborhoods

Land Uses

The City of Roanoke is a mature city in which most of the land has been developed for particular uses. Recent developments have been infill, renovation, or expansion of existing planned uses. Although a variety of projects has been completed in the last fifteen years, the general locations of uses have not changed in any substantial way.

The Existing Land Use map on page 29 depicts the City's pattern of land use:

> **Commercial uses**, office, retail, and other job-related functions, are found in the downtown core, in neighborhood commercial nodes throughout the City, or along major access ways. Downtown, which has recently prospered from a continuing influx of new office workers who have attracted new shops and restaurants, is anchored by activity centers such as the Farmers' Market. Neighborhood centers provide local retail, groceries, shops, and restaurants. Auto-related retail is located along major commercially-zoned highways. Other employment centers are located in industrial areas around the airport or in planned industrial centers such as the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology.

Residential uses in Roanoke's neighborhoods promote a distinctive character. Higher-density residential developments — smaller lot houses or multiple-unit buildings — contribute to the pedestrian quality of the older neighborhoods surrounding downtown. Newer neighborhoods built after the 1940s are more suburban in character and density. Garden apartment complexes on specific outlying sites tend to be isolated auto-oriented developments.

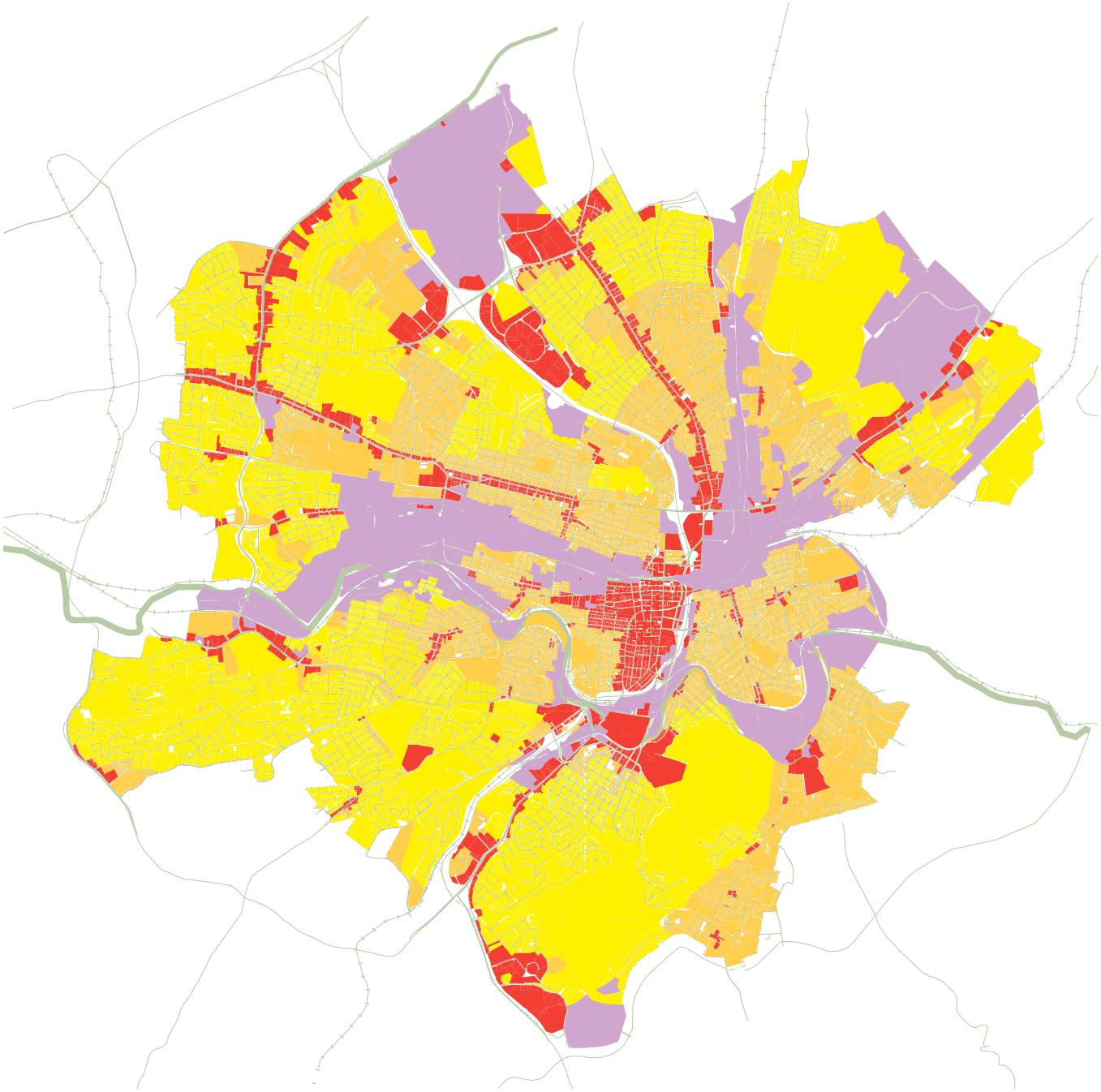
Institutional uses are located with respect to function and needed accessibility. Regional or citywide uses — municipal government buildings, the Roanoke Higher Education Center, and major hospitals — are located in or near the central downtown area or along major highways. Local institutions — schools, social services, and other similar facilities — are located near neighborhood centers. These uses can be reinforced with complementary facilities and nearby services.

Infrastructure uses are found along major highways and rail corridors. These include utility plants, landfill facilities, auto-related uses, the Roanoke Regional Airport, rail yards, and other transportation support facilities. They are often less attractive or less than the highest and best uses for particular sites, making them potential candidates for reuse.

Open space uses are found among the City's natural resources or undeveloped land. They include publicly-owned open space such as Mill Mountain. They also include recreation and park space near the Roanoke River and Victory Stadium or golf course facilities, as well as remaining agricultural land within the City. These uses are particular to the City's natural features and are often not well connected to each other or to neighborhood users.

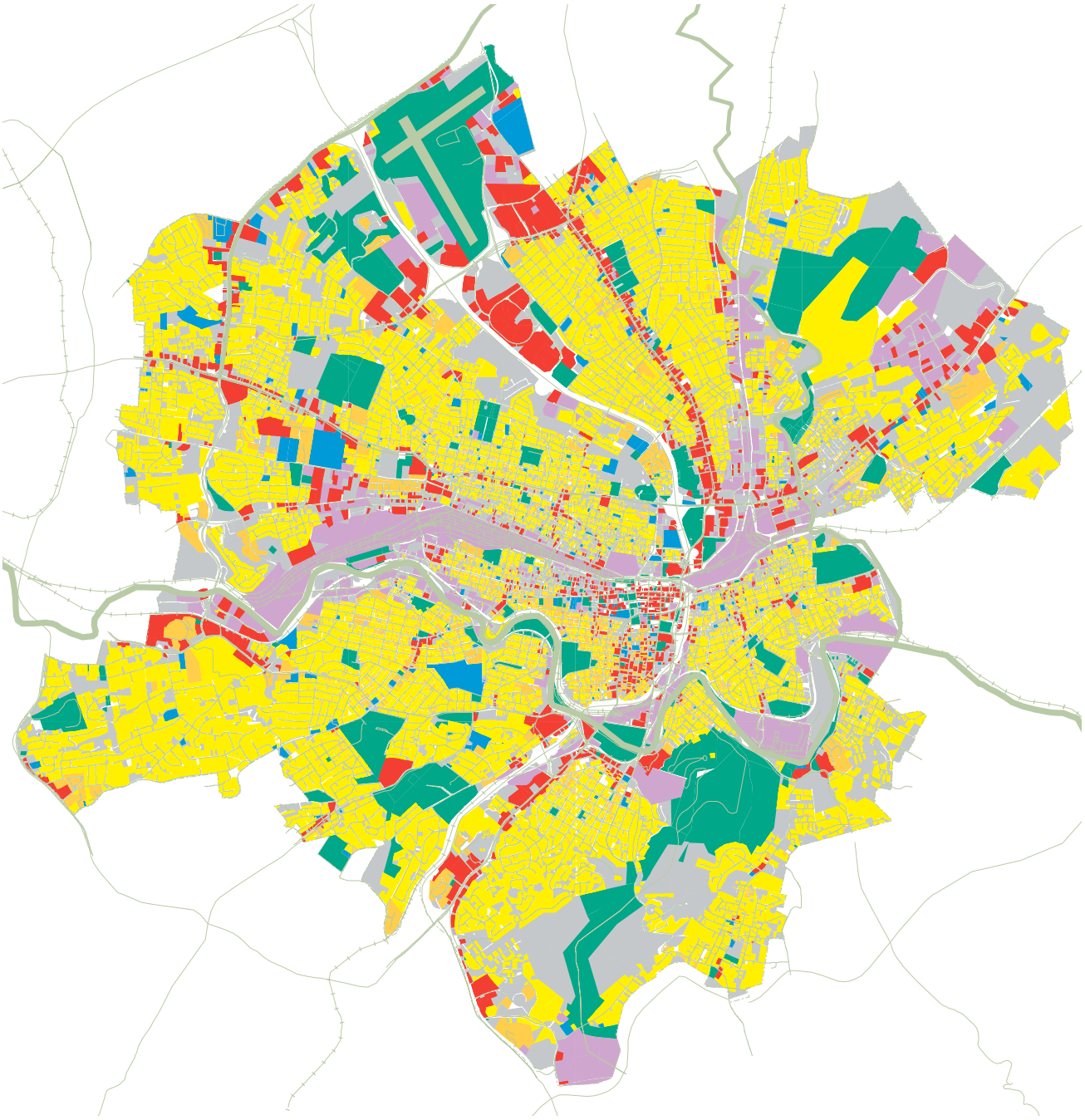
Zoning and Land Use: Opportunity Sites and Potential Conflicts

Roanoke's future land uses are to a large degree determined by what is allowed by the City's zoning ordinance, which regulates the use, density, and bulk of potential site development. Therefore, the plan's zoning map also contains an indication of where there are potential conflicts between existing land uses and what is allowed by zoning regulations. Some degree of difference is natural — the zoning map is intended in certain instances to be an agent of change.



Existing Zoning

- Single-family Residential
- Multi-family Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial



Existing Land Use

- Single-family Residential
- Multi-family Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- School/Public Facility/Park
- Religious
- Vacant

Before

After

ROANOKE DESIGN '79

In 1979, the City embarked on a revitalization plan for downtown Roanoke. A visionary city manager, Bern Ewert, recognized the economic development potential in Roanoke's historic neighborhoods and City Market. *Design '79*, spearheaded by the national firm of Moore Grover Harper, incorporated extensive citizen participation, a downtown storefront office, and a design-a-thon television show in the development of an aggressive plan for investing in and enhancing Roanoke's downtown. Following the plan, major public and private investment was made in the downtown neighborhoods, including renovations of the historic Farmer's Market. Roanoke later received an All America City Award for this effort. In 1995, Roanoke's historic market was named by the Lyndhurst Foundation as one of the Great American Public Places.